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DISCUSSION ON A PALESTINE SETTLEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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Mr. Fraser Wilkins of the State Department drew attention to four points outstanding in the Palestine settlement arising directly from the Resolution of December 11, 1948. These points were:

(1) What was to be the future of the Palestine Conciliation Commission?

(2) Could the scope of present discussions be extended to lead towards a solution of the boundary question?

(3) What was to be the future of the Jerusalem area?

(4) What was to be the decision on the right of the refugee to return--repatriation and settlement?

Mr. McGhee said that it was the United States policy to keep the solution of the Palestine question in a United Nations framework and not to intervene on a national basis. The United States Government had decided that it was neither desirable nor possible for the United States itself to propose any overall solution. It was not considered that the United States had sufficient influence on the countries concerned to persuade them to accept such a solution, and the result would only be to create bad relations and impair the position of the United States in assisting the United Nations or the states concerned in arriving at an agreement.

It, therefore, supported the continuation of the work of the United Nations through the Palestine Conciliation Commission. In Mr. McGhee's view there was no quick solution and the Conciliation Commission had a long pull before it. Its affairs appeared at the moment to be in a critical state as a result of the Israelis' refusal to utilize it for indirect talks, and the Arabs' unwillingness to talk direct to the Jews. The United States delegate to the P.C.C. would, however, urge the Commission to seek a solution in every way possible, including encouragement of direct talks. If acceptable to both parties, the Commission would mediate between the disputants.

Mr. McGhee wished to keep the Commission entirely divorced from the relief and development program. In his view coordination between the two could be achieved outside the area by the governments represented in them. In the United States view, the Commission should continue with its existing terms of reference as it appeared desirable not to risk raising the question of modified

terms

terms of reference in the General Assembly and thus precipitate general discussion of the Palestine problem.

Mr. Wright of the Foreign Office generally shared these views and was anxious to avoid a debate in the Assembly, and he considered it inadvisable to tamper with the present terms of reference of the Commission.

Mr. McGhee pointed out that the Jerusalem settlement and the report of the Economic Survey Mission must necessarily be fully debated. If the United States is to take a positive role in the economic development of the Near East, it is necessary that this development be associated with the solution of the Palestine problem. No other policy or legislative basis for United States participation in the development of the Middle East exists at present, except for the Point Four program, which is limited to technical assistance. The United States desired the United Nations to continue to assume responsibility and to provide the machinery through which the parties could solve the Palestine problem themselves. The United States wished to avoid further general statements which might serve to postpone the parties coming to grips with the problem, rather than assist them.

Mr. Wright drew a distinction between private and public advice on a settlement and cited cases in which the U.K. Government considered that informal action could facilitate settlement.

Mr. McGhee agreed, but emphasized that the parties must themselves come to grips with the problem.

On the question of Jerusalem Mr. McGhee said that the United States supported the P.C.C.'s proposal. The United States would not wish to take the initiative to amend the proposal in the General Assembly, but would be prepared to consider the amendments of others on their merits and if they appear to contribute to obtaining agreement. The plan was in their view a good compromise proposal. It was the general view of the meeting that it might be desirable to get a Sub-Committee appointed after the discussion of Jerusalem in the ad hoc Political Committee. This Sub-Committee could, under the supervision of the P.C.C. try to work out a plan based on the amendments presented. It was agreed to consider the Jerusalem problem further on the arrival of Mr. Sheringham from the Foreign Office.

Mr. Wright then raised the question of the incorporation of Arab Palestine in Jordan. The Foreign Office considered the present state of uncertainty was bound to introduce an unnecessary element of instability into the area. The incorporation of Arab Palestine into Jordan, besides removing a cause of instability, would be a material factor in solving the refugee problem. The Arab League appeared to be reconciled to the step and it seemed unlikely that the Israelis would object.

Mr. McGhee replied that when the Secretary of State, Mr. Bevin, had raised this question with Mr. Acheson, the U.S. considered that the moment was not ripe for incorporation. It was pointed out at that time that this might lead to similar declaration by Israel with respect to her occupied territory, and might be resisted by the other Arab states. New factors had now been introduced. Israel had asserted title to the territory already occupied by them and had stated there would be no cession of it.

The United States Government accepted the principle of incorporation of Arab Palestine in Jordan and was concerned only with the question of timing.

Mr. Wright suggested that some time after the General Assembly Jordan should, by proclamation, incorporate the area. The U.K. would raise no objection and he hoped that the United States would follow suit. The Anglo-Jordanian Treaty would automatically be extended to the enlarged area. He agreed with Mr. Hare that the move would in practice mean the liquidation of the greater part of the outstanding territorial settlement and would be a marked step forward.

Mr. McGhee agreed to discuss the point with the United States representatives at the coming meeting at Istanbul and reaffirmed the United States Government's agreement to the step in principle. He said that the U.S. would consider the matter further after the General Assembly.

(Approved by Mr. McGhee and Mr. Michael Wright, November 20, 1949.)